



Natural Landscaping: What to Know and Where to Go

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City of
Bloomington
Environmental
Commission

Natural Landscaping

Protecting Bloomington's natural resources is a priority for many residents. However, habitat loss due to land development and other human activities continues to increase in Bloomington and across the nation. Urban sprawl has brought more people into areas previously functioning as wildlife habitat. Landscapes associated with human development typically consist of well-manicured lawns, which frequently rely on chemicals and high water use. Lawn turf is not beneficial to wildlife and does not promote biodiversity.

Natural landscaping is a method of gardening or landscaping that promotes environmentally-balanced and sustainable practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Practicing natural landscaping leads to many benefits that include improving water, air and soil quality; controlling soil erosion; reducing sedimentation; conserving water; beautifying the land; and increasing available habitat and resources to attract desirable wildlife.



What are native plants?

Native plants are the trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, ferns and other plants that have evolved in a specific location, such as Bloomington, over thousands of years. In the United States, native plants are considered to be those present prior to European settlement. These plants have adapted to local growing conditions, such as temperature, rainfall, soils and topography. Native plants also coevolved with locally adapted animals and microbes. Thus, native plants will attract native songbirds, butterflies and other wildlife.

How should I begin?

1. Define your goals. Ask yourself if you want to attract butterflies? Birds? Create places to sit? Look around other yards for inspiration or browse gardening books and web pages for ideas.
2. Draw the basic layout of your property on paper. Imagine how it will look from inside your house as well as when outside. Mark large trees or other features.
3. Start small. Landscape a small section of your yard at a time, like planning rooms in a house. Consider how you can reach your goals in each space.
4. Define your native plantings with a sign, a border made of rocks or vegetation, or a fence.
5. Talk with your neighbors. You may inspire others to practice natural landscaping.
6. For larger projects, you may wish to consult a landscaping professional or Backyard Wildlife Habitat Steward. Stewards are trained to help Bloomington citizens create and restore wildlife habitat. You can contact a local Steward through the Center for Sustainable Living (csloffice@gmail.com or 332-8796).

Selected Native Plants

The list below features native plants highlighted in this series. For a complete listing of Bloomington natives, refer to the "Natural Landscaping HANdbook" available from the City of Bloomington Housing and Neighborhood Development Department (349-3420).

FOR NATIVE PRAIRIE GARDEN

Big Bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Prairie Blazing Star	<i>Liatris pycnostachya</i>
Butterflyweed	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
Indian Grass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
Purple Prairie Clover	<i>Petalostemum purpureum</i>
Side-Oats Grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
Stiff Goldenrod	<i>Solidago rigida</i>
Switch Grass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>

FOR NATIVE WOODLAND GARDEN

Blue Phlox	<i>Phlox divaricata</i>
Christmas Fern	<i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>
Celandine Poppy	<i>Stylophorum diphyllum</i>
Columbine	<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>
Ostrich Fern	<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>
Coralberry	<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>

FOR SHADY SITES

Arrowwood Viburnum	<i>Viburnum dentatum</i>
Larkspur	<i>Delphinium tricorne</i>
Gray Dogwood	<i>Cornus racemosa</i>
New England Aster	<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>
Virginia Bluebells	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>
Wild Bergamot (Bee-balm)	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>

FOR WET SITES

American Highbush Cranberry	<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>
Buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>
Great Blue Lobelia	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>
Queen-of-the-Prairie	<i>Filipendula rubra</i>
Swamp Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnate</i>
Sweet Joe-Pye Weed	<i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>
Turtlehead	<i>Chelone glabra</i>

FOR POND OR STREAM SIDE

Broadleaf Arrowhead	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>
White Waterlily	<i>Nymphaea odorata</i>
American Lotus	<i>Nelumbo lutea</i>
Pickering Weed	<i>Ponederia cordata</i>
Monkey Flower	<i>Mimulus ringens</i>
Blue Flag Iris	<i>Iris versicolor</i>
Water-shield	<i>Brasenia schreberi</i>
Bottlebrush Sedge	<i>Carex lurida</i>
Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Scouring Rush	<i>Equisetum hyemale</i>

Where to Go for Native Plants

Abell Nursery

7667 W. State Road 45
Bloomington IN 47403
Phone: 812-825-2530
Web site: www.abellnursery.com

Bloomington Valley Nursery

5230 S. Old Highway 37
Bloomington IN 47401
Phone: 812-824-8813

Burnham Woods Nursery (Seasonal)

6775 N. Hudoff Road
Bloomington IN 47408
Phone: 812-339-0616

May's Greenhouse

6280 S. Old Highway 37
Bloomington IN 47401
Phone: 812-824-8630
Web site: www.maysgreenhouse.net

Meadowhead Nursery

4960 Earl Young Road
Bloomington IN 47408
Phone: 812-330-9051

Shade Tree Garden

7940 W. Howard Road
Bloomington IN 47404
Phone: 812-876-1462

Stranger's Hill Greenhouses and Farm

2815 Loudon Road
Bloomington IN 47404
Phone: 812-876-6520

Also, native plants may be available at:

Bloomington Community Farmers' Market (Seasonal)

Showers Building
401 N. Morton
Bloomington IN 47403
Phone: 812-349-3738
Web site: www.bloomington.in.gov/parks

NOTE: Collecting native plants from the wild is unethical. Purchase native plants only from reputable nurseries. The Environmental Commission tried to make this list of businesses as comprehensive as possible. If we have left out a local business that carries native plants, please let us know and we will be sure to include it in future updates! Listing does not guarantee availability of particular native species; you should always call ahead. If you visit a local garden center, please encourage them to promote natural landscaping in Bloomington by stocking native plants!

References:

-Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society
www.inpaws.org

-Harstad, C. 1999. *Go Native! Landscaping with Native Plants and Wildflowers in the Midwest*. Indiana University Press.

-*The Natural Landscaping HANdbook*. City of Bloomington, 2007.